Another way to Practice the 3 R’s

Since I’m very interested in finding ways to reuse, recycle, and restore whatever I can, an article in the Cook County Board’s March Newsletter caught my attention. It advertised a webinar on the implementation of the Board’s Demolition Debris Diversion Ordinance (The 3D Ordinance). Toni Preckwinkle, President of the Board, has long been a supporter of green initiatives; so I wasn’t surprised that the Board sponsored the webinar. In her President’s column in the newsletter she said:

*I believe that Cook County should be a world-class model of sustainability. We are working not only to boost sustainability practices throughout County government, but also to join forces with local governments, nonprofits and business, to accomplish more than we could separately in making each of Cook County’s communities sustainable…*

*I also recognize that Cook County needs to share ideas and collaborate with a diverse group of community leaders and sustainability experts. In March 2012, I appointed the Cook County Sustainability Advisory Council to help lift our vision higher and give us access to best practices...*

However, I had not been aware of the 3D Ordinance and signed up for the webinar. I learned that the ordinance was passed in 2012, in order to “boost sustainability practices”. Since then, demolition companies have been required to “recycle and reuse building materials from demolitions and renovations, thus keeping them out of landfills, reclaiming valuable materials, avoiding greenhouse gas emissions and creating jobs”.

In Cook Country the demolition of any building is subject to a 70% by weight recycling requirement. The demolition of a residential structure is subject to a minimum 5% by weight reuse requirement as well. The webinar leader, Bryant Williams, who is in charge of seeing that the ordinance is implemented, said that since 2012, “the ordinance has allowed the County to recycle or reuse 90% of building materials”. If demolition companies fail to comply with the ordinance, up to $10,000 in fines can be levied.

I was very pleased to learn, from the Cook County Website, that there are several facilities that accept reusable materials. Three that are open to the public are:

The ReBuilding Exchange at 1740 W. Webster Ave. Chicago (Their website really made me want to visit them. Take a look at http://rebuildingexchange.org/. Let’s plan a GGPR field trip!!)

There’s also a ReBuilding Exchange Warehouse at 2101 Dempster St. in Evanston that we can check out.

And there’s a facility called The Reuse Depot at 50 Madison St. Maywood.

I followed up the webinar with some research on the Internet and with a phone interview with Mr. Williams. He told me that, since the 3D Ordinance was passed, the County has held over 30 workshops and training sessions to inform the demolition industry of the requirements of the ordinance. In addition, there have been numerous press releases about the ordinance and Mr. William’s office continues to provide demolition contractors with a copy of the Ordinance and the instructions on how to comply.

He added said that the County encourages municipalities to let each contractor know of the requirements of the ordinance. However, at City Hall, I was told that Park Ridge takes no responsibility for seeing that companies are told about the 3D rules. They leave all permitting requirements to Cook County.

Mr. Williams said that contractors must indicate how they will recycle, reuse and restore the debris that results from a demolition. They must file a follow-up report describing the ways in which they complied and the County also inspects as many sites as they can.

Now, when I see a building being torn down, I do feel better knowing that Cook County practices the 3 Rs--recycle, reuse, and restore--by practicing the 3 Ds. And let’s go to The ReBuilding Exchange to do our part in saving beautiful antiques by shopping!!

Nan Parson